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ABSTRACT

This report synthesizes the findings of seven studies of instructional services provided in the State of Washington to at-risk students and describes the current state of the art in the education of those special needs children. The report answers the following five questions: (1) Who are the special needs children in Washington's schools? (2) What special program services are available to students with special educational needs? (3) Are these programs reaching the different segments of the special needs student population? (4) Are all of the needs of these students being met effectively? and (5) How are the special program services provided to those students who qualify for them? The following findings are discussed: (1) there is no single adequate definition of special needs students; (2) most special programs concentrate their efforts in the early elementary grades; (3) most special programs are successful in improving the education of special needs students; (4) the pull-out model is the primary method of special program service delivery; (5) districts are trying to coordinate their special program resources; and (6) undesirable consequences of these coordination and integration efforts may penalize students with special educational needs. Three recommendations for quality education for at-risk students are discussed. (PS)

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THE Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

PROGRAM REPORT

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EDUCATING WASHINGTON'S AT-RISK YOUTH: A SYNTHESIS OF POLICIES AND RECENT STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

The Washington State Legislature passed a bill in 1986 calling for a series of studies and policy recommendations relating to the education of at-risk youth throughout the state. Defined generally as all students not achieving at a level expected for their age or grade in the regular classroom, these students are served through a collection of special programs designed to meet their special needs. Five categorical programs were the focus of the studies commissioned by the Superintendent of Public Instruction--Chapter 1 Regular, Chapter 1 Migrant, Bilingual, State Compensatory Education, and Special Education. Information drawn from state evaluations of these programs, the state assessment system, two special statewide studies, pilot studies of innovative instructional methods in six districts, and case studies and testimony from nine other districts comprise the data source for the synthesis presented in this report.

Findings highlighted in this report include the position that the generic notion of an "at-risk" or "special needs" population belies the heterogeneity of educational needs of students in that population. These needs range from severe physical handicaps and English language deficiencies which render average classroom performance virtually impossible to evidence of below average achievement in a single subject area which can be remediated with supplementary educational help. Similarly, the local environment and resources available to school districts throughout the state also vary greatly. Local efforts at meeting these students educational needs through effective coordination of categorical program services or the provision of such services through less restrictive in-class delivery must be given time to evolve toward smooth implementation and evaluation of effectiveness. Existing state initiatives which promote statewide dissemination efforts following the identification of effective practices must continue; and local districts must be encouraged to include consideration of these special program services in their ongoing self-assessments and school improvement plans.

In 1986, the Washington State Legislature passed SHB 1829, focusing on instructional services to students with special needs. This bill was requested by the Superintendent of Public Instruction in response to the expressed concerns of educators and the general public about the education of "at-risk" youth in Washington's schools. An initial activity mandated by this legislation was the study of instructional services provided to students in need of educational assistance through categorical programs. The State Superintendent commissioned several such studies targeted on the policies, processes and outcomes of educational services to students with special needs throughout the state. In these studies, "special needs" children are all those who are not achieving in the classroom at a level expected for their age or grade. This may be due to a variety of causes---ranging from specific learning disorders arising from a physically handicapping condition to the cumulative effects of living in poverty. The full complement of these studies has spanned the continuum of sources of special educational needs. The purpose of this report is to synthesize the results of these studies, and to describe the current state of the art in the education of special needs children throughout the state of Washington.

THE STUDIES

Sources of information for this report include four statewide studies, two highly focused studies on small samples of school districts, and case studies from three school districts selected for their documented efforts at trying to improve the special services for these students. Before going on to examine their results, in light of the issues at hand, a brief description of these sources is provided below.

1. Washington Statewide Assessment---Each year, the state testing office conducts an assessment of students' Reading, Math and

Language Arts skills in grades 4, 8, and 10. These results, along with important background information on the 50,000 students tested at each grade provide critical information on the achievement of special needs students throughout the state.

2. Statewide Teacher Survey---Classroom teachers from 300 of Washington's elementary schools were surveyed to gather information on the nature of instructional services for students with special educational needs in their schools. The high rate of response from the scientifically selected sample ensures the validity of these findings as presenting an accurate picture of these instructional services statewide.

3. Statewide Study of Categorical Program Participation---Data from a variety of sources at the state and district levels were compiled to determine the patterns of student participation in five categorical programs for children with special needs. These five comprise the array of special programs at issue in the current report, and results of this study provide answers to questions of multiple program participation and student achievement rarely known among the collection of such disparate programs.

4. Statewide Evaluation Reports of Individual Categorical Programs---Generally, both state and federally funded categorical programs produce annual evaluation reports describing the nature, participation, and outcomes of their services throughout the state. For purposes of this synthesis, these reports were available for Chapter 1 Regular, Chapter 1 Migrant, Bilingual, and RAP programs.

5. The Enhancing Instructional Program Options Project (EIPOP)---Six school districts experimenting with methods of providing instructional services to special needs students. They sought to renegotiate the relationship between basic and special educational programs and strengthen the regular school program for these students with special needs.

6. Testimony from three EIPOP districts---Three districts provided detailed reports of their experiences in changing their delivery of instruction to students with special educational needs. These reports present the full spectrum of service provision to these students at the local level--from the administrative details at the school and district office to the dynamics of working with special needs children in the classroom.

7. Case studies of six districts administering multiple categorical programs---The coordination and delivery of special program services from a variety of categorical programs are described for six selected districts throughout the state.

The full complement of these studies provides a global look at the education of students with special needs through the statewide studies, as well as a detailed and specific look through the testimony and case studies of individual schools and districts. Variations in program funding mechanisms, eligibility requirements, participation and achievement patterns, and the nature of the instructional process are all abundantly represented in the collection of these studies.

Again, the purpose of this report is to synthesize the findings of these studies to address the important questions of a variety of audiences on the education of students with special needs throughout the state of Washington. We will structure the report around the following five questions:

1. Who are the special needs children in Washington's schools?
2. What special program services are available to students with special educational needs?
3. Are these programs serving different special needs students?
4. Are all of the needs of these students' being met effectively?
5. How are the special program services provided to those students who qualify for them?

1. Who are the special needs children in Washington's schools?

A variety of characteristics describe students with special educational needs in Washington, but all have to do with their performance in the classroom. Children who are achieving below expected standards for their age or grade level are typically the focal point of these special program services. Importantly, however, this "symptom" of low achievement can stem from many different causes and it is to these varying causes that the different categorical program services are directed.

Physical and emotional handicaps along a wide continuum of severity can cause or influence poor performance in the classroom. Students who are visually impaired, emotionally disturbed, or are experiencing specific learning disabilities are examples of these. Special Education program services are designed to help these students receive a complete education.

Insufficient fluency in the English language is also a barrier to acceptable performance in the classroom. Bilingual program services are provided for a variety of minority groups for whom English is not the native language.

Migrant occupational status also presents special learning problems for children in these families. Moving in and out of communities and schools, sometimes several times in the same year, poses obvious obstacles to children performing adequately in school. Chapter 1 Migrant programs and services are available to these students.

The influence of poverty on students' performance in school has also been the focus of special categorical program provision. Chapter 1 "Regular" (as opposed to Migrant) programs are targeted to low achieving students, but only those attending schools with high concentrations of children from low income families.

Finally, even if none of the special circumstances above are in evidence, students who are simply not achieving at an acceptable level for their grade can be considered as having special educational needs. The State Remediation Assistance Program (RAP) was designed to target the same students as the Chapter 1 Regular program, but without the requirement of poverty concentration in the school.

Given these broad, descriptive characteristics of students with special needs, an initial question might be "How many of these special needs students are there in Washington?" In Table 1, there are estimates of these numbers taken from a variety of state reports and data bases. These are not meant to be exact figures for each category of special needs students, but are sufficient to represent the magnitude of these needs among Washington's students.

TABLE 1

Number of Special Needs Children in Washington
Estimates for 1985

	Number of Students	Percent of Total Enrollment
Total Enrollment	741,130	
Achieving below grade level	333,508	45%
Living below poverty standard	113,000	15%
Handicapped	66,222	9%
Migrant status	19,292	3%
Bilingual	13,939	2%

Washington's public school enrollment is approximately 750,000 students statewide. Of these, nearly 45% are achieving below grade level standards when these standards are based on national averages. Note that if Washington's students were achieving at the national average, this number would be 50%. While the above average achievement reflects well on the state's educational system, there are still a large number of students who can be considered in special need using this broad definition---over 330,000 students. The poverty criterion suggests that about 113,000 students, or 15%

of the school population are needy in this regard. Over 60,000 students qualify under one or more of the 14 educationally handicapped classifications. Washington's migrant student population is just under 20,000, and students needing assistance in attaining fluency in the English language number just under 14,000.

One can add these numbers and arrive at the alarming interpretation that over 70% of the entire student population evidences some form of "special need." This is not accurate because it ignores the overlap of these characteristics in many of the same students. Research tells us that many students from low income families are also low achievers, for example. Data presented later in this report will show that many migrant students also need assistance in English language development.

In fact, one of the purposes of the studies synthesized here was to determine to what extent these programs are serving the same students. Or, from an administrative point of view, can these apparently very separate programs be integrated to provide whatever services are needed to all of the "at-risk" youth in Washington's schools?

To adequately address these questions, we must consider all phases of the five categorical programs under study here. In the next section, we will briefly describe each program and examine patterns of participation and achievement of the special needs students they serve.

2. What special program services are currently available to students with special educational needs?

This report is concerned with five federal or state-funded programs for students with special needs in Washington---Chapter 1 Regular, Chapter 1

Migrant, Bilingual Education, Special Education, and the state Remediation Assistance Program. While the five programs are similar in that they all intend to serve students with some type of special needs, they are very different in their origins, from both educational and legislative perspectives. These differences must be carefully considered as we view the array of program services available to these children. In Table 2, we characterize these distinctions and compare the five programs in terms of their basic intents, services provided, restrictions and funding sources. In Tables 3 and 4 we display the number of districts providing each of these program services and the number of special needs students participating in them statewide during the 1985-86 school year.

TABLE 2
Summary of Programs Available for Special Needs Children in Washington

	Intended Participants	Services Provided	Grade/ Age Range	Fund Source
Chapter 1	Students achieving below grade level in schools with a high percentage of students from low income families	Supplementary assistance in Reading, Math and Language Arts; also, communication, readiness and support services	Pre-K - 12	Federal
State Remediation Assistance Program (RAP)	Students achieving below grade level; half of funds must be spent in Chapter 1 eligible schools	Supplementary assistance in Reading, Math and Language Arts	2-9	State
Migrant	Students whose families have moved into the state within past 5 years	All curriculum areas; related suport services on a supplementary basis	Ages 3-21	Federal
Bilingual	Students whose English language skills are deficient enough to impair learning in basic educational programs	Supplementary assistance designed to acquire English language fluency	Pre-K - 12	State
Special Education	Students exhibiting characteristics of one or more of 14 handicapping conditions	All curricular areas, plus related services needed to receive an appropriate public education	Birth - 21	Federal & State

The Chapter 1 Regular program (henceforth called simply "Chapter 1") is the largest of these programmatic efforts outside of Special Education. The federally funded program is offered in 281 of Washington's 299 school districts, and serves nearly 60,000 students from pre-kindergarten to grade 12. In these districts, only schools with high concentrations of poverty are allocated Chapter 1 funds, and low achieving students within these schools are served. The provision of supplementary assistance in basic skill subject areas (Reading, Math and Language Arts) is concentrated at the early grade levels, as is suggested by the data for grades 4, 8 and 10 in Table 3. Reports from previous years show that over 50% of the participants in Chapter 1 are in grades 1-4, and fewer than 10% are at the high school level. This pattern is not unique to Washington. Nationally, Chapter 1 reports consistently show that over two-thirds of the students served are in grades 1-6. Further, in Washington, the emphasis of these services is in Reading. Approximately 75% of the Chapter 1 participants are receiving assistance in Reading, while fewer than 30% are receiving assistance in Math.

The state Remediation Assistance Program (RAP) was designed to provide services to essentially the same type of special needs student as Chapter 1, but in all schools in the district, regardless of their poverty levels. The program is available only in grades 2-9, and is administered separately for grades 2-6 and 7-9 with slightly different regulations in the two grade bands. Nearly 30,000 students are served in RAP programs in 278 of Washington's districts. Like Chapter 1, more elementary school students than junior high school students participate. Approximately 75% of the RAP participants are in grades 2-6, while only 25% are in grades 7-9. Unlike

Chapter 1, however, RAP services are provided more in Math than in Reading. Previous reports show that over 50% of the students in RAP programs are receiving assistance in Math, while fewer than 40% of these students are in Reading.

The Chapter 1 Migrant program provides services in all curricular areas to children of age 3-21 in migratory families. Nearly 20,000 children qualify for these services in Washington, the fourth largest total in the nation. Instructional programs are offered in 60 of Washington's school districts, and materials and other support services are provided by Centers and special projects throughout the state. Approximately 7,000 students receive instructional program services during the regular school year and 3,000 are served during the summer. The vast majority of these services are in Reading or Oral Language Development. As in Chapter 1 and RAP, most of the instructional help is concentrated on younger children---about 50% of these are below grade 4. A significant effort is directed toward helping older children complete high school graduation requirements, however. Over 1,000 migrant students are assisted in this way. An important non-instructional service the program is intended to provide is in the health care of these children. Almost 7,000 of them receive thorough health screenings or complete physical exams during the year.

The Transitional Bilingual Instruction program (Bilingual) is designed to work with students for whom English is not their native language. These efforts are directed toward helping these students acquire the fluency with the English language which will allow them to participate in the regular classroom environment. Bilingual programs are conducted in 106 of the 299 school districts in Washington, and serve nearly 14,000 students. These

students represent a wide variety of native languages, but three primary languages account for more than two-thirds of the bilingual students served---Spanish (40%), Cambodian (15%) and Vietnamese (14%). Program services are provided with varying emphasis on the student's native language and English in Bilingual, ESL and Immersion methods of instructional delivery.

Special Education program services are provided from both federal and state funding sources to students qualifying under any of 14 handicapping conditions. These conditions range from severe physical handicaps which preclude participation in regular classroom learning activities to mild behavioral disorders and specific learning disabilities for which "mainstreaming" into the basic education program is possible and usually considered desirable for these students. Services are to include any instructional and support assistance needed to provide these students with an appropriate public education. Student participation in Special Education programs requires a formal and deliberate referral, assessment, and diagnostic process unlike any other special program. Funds are allocated to school districts or intermediate service units (ESD's) based on the number of students identified through this process. Virtually all districts provide these services. Exceptions occur only if a district does not identify a single student as qualifying. Over 65,000 students statewide receive Special Education program services. State assessment data indicates that, at grades 4, 8, and 10 these students number about 2,000 or approximately 4% of the students at each of those grade levels. This is likely an underestimate in that many Special Education students are not included in these assessment activities due to their handicapping condition.

TABLE 3

Number of Washington School Districts Providing
Programs for Special Needs Students

	Number of Districts	Percent of Districts
State Total	299	
Districts with:		
Chapter 1 Programs	281	94%
RAP Programs	278	93%
Special Ed Services	224+*	99%*
Chapter 1 Migrant Programs	60	20%
Bilingual Programs	106	35%

* Funds are often allocated to a single cooperative educational agency which provides services to several surrounding school districts. There are 224 districts or cooperatives providing services which are available to virtually all districts in the State.

TABLE 4

Number (and Percent) of Students Receiving Services
in Five Special Programs

	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10	All Grades (1984-85)
Total Tested	51,888	54,987	60,644	741,130
Students in:				
Chapter 1	4,940 (9.5%)	1,804 (3%)	567 (1%)	59,734 (8%)
RAP	2,682 (5%)	1,279 (2%)	*	28,618 (4%)
Special Ed	2,262 (4%)	2,489 (4%)	2,053 (3%)	66,222 (9%)
Migrant	297 (**)	82 (**)	67 (**)	6,980 (1%)
Bilingual	494 (1%)	364 (**)	381 (**)	13,939 (2%)

* RAP is not offered at grade 10.
** Less than one percent.

In summary, Chapter 1 and RAP programs are the most similar of these programs, in terms of the students they are intended to serve---those achieving below grade level, with no other specific learning impairments. Students in some of the less severe handicapping conditions in Special Education---mild behavioral problems and specific learning disabilities, for example---may also "fit" in this group. Clearly, the more severely handicapped students present categorically different demands for educational assistance. Bilingual and Migrant programs are also meaningfully different in that they deal with students who cannot readily function in the basic education program due to language deficiencies or lifestyles.

From this view of program intents and participation, we turn to information which tells us how many special needs students participate in multiple programs and whether these patterns of participation encompass all of these students special needs.

3. Are these programs serving different special needs students?

As already noted, the five special programs described above have their origins in different legislative actions, and have varying degrees of difference in program intents and regulations. Given these differences, are these programs reaching different segments of the special needs student population in Washington? If they are, do these differences reflect different educational needs of the students, or differences in the program's eligibility requirements? Do many students participate in more than one of these programs? Is there a generic "at risk" population of students who need a wide variety of services, or are their distinctly different subpopulations of students with different educational needs?

A "duplicated" count of students receiving services in the five special programs includes over 175,000 or nearly one-fourth of Washington's public school students. If there are students who participate in more than one program, however, this is an inflated indication of the number of individual children who are receiving special program services. A tabulation of students who participate in one or more special programs is presented in Table 5 for grades 4, 8 and 10. Of all students tested at these grades, about 19% receive assistance in one or more special programs in grade 4, 11% in grade 8, and 5% in grade 10. As noted earlier, this is likely an underestimate of the total school population at these grades, since many Special Education, Bilingual,

and Migrant students cannot participate in the state testing program for reasons related to their special needs---handicapping condition, language fluency, and transiency, respectively. Still, results of the state assessment each year include nearly 90% of the students at each of these grades, and it represents the only source of data on special program participation per child currently available.

The decline in the number of children receiving special program services at the higher grade levels is apparent in the figures in Table 5. Nearly 10,000 fourth grade students participate in one or more of the five special programs. At grade 10, there are only 3,000. This is not indicative of fewer children in need at these grade levels---the statewide average achievement at grade 10 is not meaningfully different from that of grades 4 or 8. It is a reflection of fewer special program resources available at the higher grades. For example, Chapter 1 programs are typically targeted to the elementary grades, and RAP programs are restricted to grades 2-9. Exceptions are in the Bilingual and Special Education program areas. These programs serve roughly the same number of students at all three grades.

The information in Table 5 also shows that few of the students with special needs participate in more than one special program. In general, over 85% of the students receiving special program assistance are receiving it from only one program. These proportions, based on the number of students participating in one or more special programs, are given in Table 6. The largest number of students participating in two programs is found in Chapter 1 and RAP programs in grade 4, and this amounts to only 6% of the 9,637 students receiving special services at that grade level.

TABLE 5

Number of Students Participating
in Special Needs Programs

	Grade 4		Grade 8		Grade 10	
	Number of Students	% of all Students	Number of Students	% of all Students	Number of Students	% of all Students
Total number of students receiving special program services	9,637	19%	5,774	11%	3,062	5%
Number of students participating in one program						
Chapter 1 only	3,897	9%	1,399	3%	509	1%
RAP only	1,867	4%	997	2%	*	
Migrant only	152	**	31	**	33	**
Bilingual only	354	**	309	**	344	**
Special Ed only	2,042	3%	2,489	4%	1,710	3%
TOTAL	8,312	17%	5,225	10%	2,596	4%
Number of students participating in two programs						
Chapter 1 & RAP	592	1%	176	**	*	
Chapter 1 & Special Ed	220	**	155	**	8	**
Chapter 1 & Bilingual	142	**	51	**	15	**
Chapter 1 & Migrant	38	**	5	**	2	**
Migrant & Bilingual	41	**	22	**	27	**
RAP & Special Ed	147	**	73	**	*	
RAP & Migrant	35	**	12	**	*	
RAP & Bilingual	63	**	28	**	*	
TOTAL	1,278	2%	522	1%	52	1%

* RAP is not offered at grade 10.
** Less than one percent.

TABLE 6

Percent of Special Needs Students Participating
in Single vs. Multiple Programs

	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10
Single Services			
Chapter 1 only	40%	24%	17%
RAP only	19%	17%	*
Migrant only	2%	1%	1%
Bilingual only	4%	5%	11%
Special Ed only	21%	43%	56%
TOTAL	86%	90%	85%
Dual Services			
Chapter 1 & RAP	6%	3%	*
Chapter 1 & Special Ed	3%	3%	1%
Chapter 1 & Bilingual	2%	1%	1%
RAP & Special Ed	2%	*	*

* RAP is not offered at grade 10.

Data presented in Tables 5 and 6 indicate, among other things, that there is not much duplication of service across programs for special needs children. Again, however, the proportions presented in Table 6 are based on all students participating in at least one special program---some 9,637 students in grade 4; 5,774 in grade 8; and 3,062 in grade 10. If one looks at a specific program and its participants, there are instances of high program overlap. For example, over one-third of the students receiving Chapter 1 migrant services are also receiving Bilingual program services. Relative to the entire special needs population, however, this is not a large number or percentage of children.

Given that there is not a great deal of overlap among these programs in terms of the students they serve, one might conclude that these are categorically different programs serving categorically different students. An alternative interpretation is that the programs are serving similar groups of students with similar educational needs, and that district administrators are simply doing a good job of managing resources from several different programs to serve as many of their special needs students as possible. These alternatives are difficult to disentangle, and the true state is likely somewhere in between. One way to address the question of similarity or differences between students in these programs is to consider the one common indicator of need they all share---academic achievement in the basic skill areas.

Reading and Math test scores for special needs students participating in one or two special programs are shown in Table 7. Scores are presented in Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) and Percentile (%ile) units. Several trends are evident from these data. First, students participating in more than one program are lower achievers than those receiving assistance in just one. For example, at grade 4 the average special needs student participating in one program is achieving at the 20th percentile in Reading while those participating in two programs average at the 12th percentile. This discrepancy declines somewhat at higher grade levels in Reading, but not in Math. Even at grade 10 in Math, special needs students in one program score at the 22nd percentile, while those in two programs score at the 16th percentile.

TABLE 7

Achievement Status of Students Participating
in One or Two Special Programs

	Grade 4		Grade 8		Grade 10	
	NCE	%ile	NCE	%ile	NCE	%ile
Reading						
One Program						
Chapter 1 only	32	20	32	20	34	23
RAP only	33	21	31	19	*	*
Migrant only	30	17	29	16	34	23
Bilingual only	38	28	22	10	22	10
Special Ed only	23	10	27	14	26	13
AVE.	32	20	28	15	29	16
Two Programs						
Chapter 1 & RAP	30	17	33	21	*	*
Chapter 1 & Special Ed	24	11	26	13	25	12
Chapter 1 & Bilingual	23	10	19	7	**	**
Migrant & Bilingual	22	9	19	7	29	16
AVE.	25	12	24	11	27	14
Mathematics						
One Program						
Chapter 1 only	34	23	32	20	34	23
RAP only	37	27	33	21	*	*
Migrant only	37	27	**	**	**	**
Bilingual only	48	47	41	33	41	33
Special Ed only	25	12	25	12	26	13
AVE.	36	25	35	24	34	22
Two Programs						
Chapter 1 & RAP	32	20	28	15	*	*
Chapter 1 & Special Ed	27	14	24	11	25	12
Chapter 1 & Bilingual	35	24	35	24	**	**
Migrant & Bilingual	34	22	23	10	33	21
AVE.	32	20	28	15	29	16

* RAP is not offered at grade 10.

** No statistics are presented because data are available on fewer than 10 students statewide.

There are also clear differences in the achievement profiles of students participating in different special programs. In both subject areas, Special Education students score meaningfully lower than students in the other programs. Bilingual students at the higher grades are a notable exception to this, but only in Reading, where their language comprehension difficulties impair their performance on the test. When their Math scores are considered, they are the highest achievers of all the students participating in special programs---averaging as high as the 47th percentile. At all grades, students participating in Chapter 1 or RAP programs, but not both, show about the same level of achievement in Reading and Math.

In general, there appear to be two levels of educational needs in the basic skill areas represented by the special needs population of children in Washington. One level is characterized by Chapter 1 and RAP students who are achieving at the 20-25th percentile. Another is represented by students in Special Education---those who can be tested achieve at the 10-15th percentile. There is a significant proportion of these, as well as Bilingual and Migrant, students, however, for whom comparable data on these achievement indicators cannot be presented. As previously noted, for reasons inherently related to their special needs, such standardized test data are not available.

A review of the fundamental intents of these five programs suggests that cognitive achievement needs represent only one dimension of need for these children. Bilingual program students need to acquire the English language skills which will enable them to meaningfully participate in learning activities in the basic educational program. Migrant students have health-related needs which are to be addressed using Migrant program

resources. Certain handicapping conditions in Special Education are characterized by important socio-emotional needs. The status of these students along these dimensions is often difficult to measure in any standardized way, and is not routinely reported statewide.

4. Are all of the needs of these students being met effectively?

The number of students reportedly participating in one or more of the five special programs ranges from just under 20% to less than 5% in grades 4, 8 and 10. Given the earlier estimates of the number of children in Washington's schools who could be considered in need of special program assistance (see Table 1), these numbers are quite low. This suggests that available resources to serve special needs children are not sufficient under current definitions of special needs and methods of providing services. In addition, the declining proportion of students served at higher grade levels by some programs is not reflective of less need at those grade levels. From data already presented, it is apparent that special program resources are severely limited and that decisions must be and are being made as to where to concentrate them.

With a shortage of resources and no apparent decline in need, the effective use of those resources is a critical concern. Of that portion of the needy population receiving services, are these students needs being met?

Evaluation data available for Chapter 1 and RAP programs statewide indicate that these students show significant achievement gains through their achievement in the program, particularly at the early grade levels. Although these trends vary by subject matter and grade, students who enter the program achieving at the 20-25th percentile typically advance to the 30th percentile

or higher. Many of these Chapter 1 and RAP students return to the basic education classroom, achieving a goal much like that of the Bilingual program. The transition of special needs students from special programs to the basic education classroom is a criterion of program effectiveness. Over 15% of the students receiving Bilingual program services meet the program's exit criteria to join the basic education classroom each year. Many of these receive these services for more than one year, but only another 15% are served in the program for more than three years.

Special Education and Migrant students may characterize that portion of the special needs population in Washington schools which possesses the widest variety of special needs. Students in Special Education programs typically receive a wider range of instructional services as well. In a study conducted in six school districts around the state, the number of subject areas in which Chapter 1, RAP, and Special Education students received assistance was recorded. Table 8 contains a summary of these data. Over 80% of the Chapter 1 and RAP students received assistance in only one subject area. In Special Education, this was true for only 12% of the students. More than 60% of the Special Education students received help in three or more subject areas.

TABLE 8

Percent of Special Needs Students Receiving Assistance
in One to Six Subject Areas in 6 Selected School Districts

	One Subject	Two Subjects	Three Subjects	Four Subjects	Five Subjects	Six Subjects	Total
Chapter 1	81%	14%	4%	1%	0	0	100%
RAP	84%	12%	3%	1%	0	0	100%
Special Ed	22%	24%	32%	22%	9%	1%	100%

Active migrant students will often enter and leave a community and school district for one or two months at a time, sometimes more than once a year. They receive assistance in all subject areas. As many students receive health and support services as instructional services---nearly 7,000 each year. Furthermore, their presence and educational needs are not confined to the usual school year calendar. Almost 3,000 migrant students receive instructional support during the summer months.

Mobility from district to district within the state is not confined to students in Chapter 1 migrant programs. Although these are the children for whom such transiency is a part of their lifestyle, other children experience this disruption in their social and educational development as well. For some special needs students, it may mean that they no longer qualify for special assistance, given the population characteristics of their new environment. In Chapter 1, for example, the low achieving portion of the district population may consist of students scoring below the 25th percentile in one district or as high as the 40th percentile in another. A student scoring at the 35th percentile would be considered in need of Chapter 1 in the latter district, but relative to the overall lower achievement in the former, he/she would not.

The incidence of students moving in and out of school districts throughout the state is not trivial. In Table 9, the proportion of students initially entering elementary schools at each grade level is summarized separately for students participating in Chapter 1 programs and the remainder of the student population. In general, only 50%-60% of the students surveyed entered their districts at kindergarten and remained there through fourth grade. Roughly 10% of these students were new to the districts in each successive grade level. Differences between Chapter 1 and all other students in these mobility rates are not large, but begin to increase at higher grade levels.

TABLE 9

Percent of Chapter 1 and All Other Fourth Grade Students
Entering the District at Each Prior Grade

	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Chapter 1 Students	52%	12%	11%	13%	12%	100%
All Other Students	58%	11%	9%	12%	10%	100%
Average	57%	11%	9%	12%	11%	100%

With this significant portion of Washington's students exhibiting such a variety of educational and other needs, the effects of serving these students are visible on other members of the school community. Depending upon how and where these services are provided, classroom teachers and other students---that majority of the student population who do not exhibit these special needs---are also affected. To understand the effects of providing these special services on the basic education classroom environment, we move away from statewide statistics of participation and achievement, and toward descriptions of the nature and extent of these services provided in schools and classrooms.

5. How are the special program services provided to those students who qualify for them?

In general, each of the special programs represented in this report fund instructional staff to provide program services to eligible students. These services can be in the form of direct instruction to the students, or in assisting classroom teachers to work with them in the basic education classroom. Direct instructional services to special needs students can be

provided within the regular classroom, or by using a "pull-out" system in which those students participating in a special program leave the basic education classroom for a portion of the day to receive the special assistance they need.

Elementary school classroom teachers throughout the state reported whether special program services are provided to their students in the classroom, by pull-out, or both. Table 10 summarizes these results according to each special program provided. Nearly 40% of the teachers indicated that they have students pulled out of their classrooms for Chapter 1 or Special Education services. Few teachers report that special program services are provided exclusively within their classrooms. A combination of pull-out and in-class strategies is more common than in-class alone for all special programs.

TABLE 10

Percent of Teachers Reporting Students
Receiving Direct Services in Various Delivery Models, Grades 1-6

	Pull-Out	In-Class	Combination
Chapter 1	39%	7%	20%
RAP	19%	6%	12%
Special Ed	38%	5%	29%
Migrant	4%	1%	1%
Bilingual	11%	4%	7%

Teachers surveyed in May, 1986 indicated they have difficulty working with special students needs in their classroom. A summary of their responses is given in Table 11. Only 8% of the teachers said it was not difficult for them to work with these students in their classrooms. The reasons most often given

were those of sheer numbers. Class sizes are already too large, there are too many behavioral problems and there are too many special needs students in the classroom. A second level of reasons had to do with inadequate materials, training, and instructional aides for working with these children.

TABLE 11

Teacher Ratings of Difficulty Working
with Special Needs Students in Classroom, Grades 1-6

	Number of Teachers	Percent of Teachers
Very Difficult	121	22%
Difficult	225	39%
Somewhat Difficult	179	31%
Not Difficult	46	8%

When asked about their satisfaction with the more common pull-out services provided to special needs children, almost three-fourths of the teachers surveyed responded that these services were satisfactory or highly satisfactory. Those that found them only somewhat or not at all satisfactory expressed concerns for what the special needs students were missing in the regular classroom while they were pulled out, and the lack of coordination between the curriculum of the pull-out program and the basic education program. Many teachers also reported that students did not receive enough service and that too few were pulled out. These data are summarized in Table 12.

TABLE 12

Teacher Ratings of Their Satisfaction of Pullout Services for Special Needs Children

	Number of Teachers	Percent of Teachers
Highly Satisfactory	166	31%
Satisfactory	223	41%
Somewhat Satisfactory	126	23%
Not Satisfactory	27	5%

Concerns raised by Washington's elementary school teachers reinforce the predominance of the pull-out delivery model for special programs, but they do not indicate that it is their preferred method of service provision for these students. Indeed, their reasons for having difficulty in working with these students within their own classrooms point to a lack of instructional support in an already demanding classroom environment. On the average, these elementary classrooms contain 27 students and there may be 5-10 students needing special assistance on a given day. In some schools and districts it is substantially more, in others less.

Testimony from three districts attempting to bridge the gap between the basic educational program and three of these categorical programs for students with special needs (Special Education, Chapter 1 and RAP) offers some optimism but only preliminary findings of success. Fostering a belief in the value of educating students with special needs in the "least restrictive environment", i.e., the regular classroom, these districts have used special program resources to provide early intervention and consultative support to classroom teachers in working with their special needs students. School support teams

consisting of principals, school psychologists, categorical program teachers and classroom teachers work together to identify students who are experiencing difficulty in the classroom before their learning problems become so serious as to require formal referral and diagnosis. Assistance, in the form of materials, instructional strategies or direct services to the children, is given to the classroom teacher by special program staff. Initial outcomes of these efforts include substantial reductions in formal referrals to Special Education and in pull-outs from the classroom for other special services. Preliminary findings in these and six other districts indicate that classroom teachers are highly satisfied with the in-class provision of services and that the special needs students receiving them are making satisfactory progress.

Lest these initially optimistic findings be over-interpreted, however, even these "pilot" efforts have encountered undesirable side-effects. While they appear to be working well at the classroom and student levels, potential funding and administrative consequences loom large in the future. These districts have reduced pull-outs and formal referrals to Special Education. The latter directly influences the funding received in Special Education, while the former can indirectly lead to an erosion of resources over time. Indeed, the full implications of such an integrated approach to providing services to students with special needs must be examined. The advantage of such coordination and integration is undoubtedly most pronounced at the service delivery level. The varying legislative requirements of these programs, in terms of targeting, staffing, and service delivery, can pose administrative headaches at the local level which obstruct the provision of the full array of special services needed for some students. Examples of

these requirements are too numerous to fully document here, but they include:

1. Provision of RAP services in grades 2-6 must be in instructional groupings of 5 or fewer students per instructor. This places obvious limitations on the number of students served given existing costs of staffing.

2. Differing testing requirements for selection, placement and evaluation of students in the various special programs can result in burdensome time commitments for staff and loss of valuable instructional time for the students.

3. Only Special Education-certified staff can conduct diagnostic testing on students referred for such an assessment. This, too, places limits on the number of children to be served given the costs and availability of such highly trained staff.

4. In general, special needs students may not be served in the same subject area by more than one program. The RAP/Special Education relationship is even more restrictive. Students in all but three handicapping conditions in Special Education are prohibited from participating in RAP regardless of the subject area in which they are receiving assistance.

5. The formula for funding varies a great deal among programs. In Chapter 1, it is based on district poverty levels. Migrant funding is a proportion of Chapter 1 funding, even though the intended recipients of the services are not always in residence to be included in the poverty assessment. Special Education funds are based on the number of children formally identified as qualifying for service, thus penalizing local efforts aimed at early detection and prevention of serious learning difficulties.

Attempts at coordination of special programs at the local level are evident throughout the state. These efforts are, by necessity, long term ones. Smooth implementation of an integrated program delivery model is attained gradually, and informative evaluation data, both process and outcome, must also accumulate over time. While initial results are optimistic, they have been obtained in only a few districts across the state, and are not equally applicable to all five special programs studied here. Bilingual and Migrant programs, for example, offer meaningfully different demands for special assistance which are not easily blended with other special needs students in the regular classroom.

Summary and Implications of Current Studies of Programs for Students with Special Needs

The collection of special studies commissioned by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, along with existing data collection and reporting systems in the state of Washington provide a wealth of knowledge on the education of children with special educational needs throughout the state. In this closing section, we will summarize this knowledge base and suggest some of the implications of these findings for utilizing special program resources to meet the needs of this special population of students.

There is no single definition of educational need which adequately describes students currently receiving special program services. While some of the special programs are more similar than others, the full population of "at-risk" students portray an impressive variety of educational needs. These needs range from severe physical handicaps and English language deficiencies which render average classroom performance virtually impossible, to evidence of below average achievement in a specific subject area which can be remediated with supplementary instructional help.

Most special programs concentrate their efforts in the early elementary grades. Although data do not suggest that educational needs are greater at these grades, educators are committed to the belief that early intervention offers the greatest chance of successfully remediating learning difficulties. Only Special Education and Bilingual programs are exceptions. They serve roughly the same number of students at each grade level.

Evaluation data indicate that these programs are successful in improving the education of students with special needs. In the Chapter 1 and RAP

programs, assistance to students results in improved achievement in the basic skill areas. In these and the Bilingual program, this success also effects a transition for these students to the basic education classroom.

The pull-out model is the primary method of special program service delivery in Washington's public schools. Classroom teachers have difficulty dealing with special needs children in the basic education classroom because their class sizes are already too large and too many children require special assistance. Still, teachers have concerns for the disruptive effects on many of these children of removing them from the classroom environment for a portion of the school day.

Districts throughout the state are trying to coordinate their special program resources to best meet the needs of their special needs students. Relatively few students with special educational needs participate in more than one special program. While most Chapter 1 and RAP students receive assistance in only one subject area, Chapter 1 students typically receive Reading assistance, and RAP students receive Math. Special Education students are significantly lower achievers than these students, and usually receive help in three or more subject areas. The small percentage of students that participate in more than one program demonstrate greater educational need in terms of their test scores in the basic skill area. Efforts toward integrating the instructional support given these students are in evidence throughout the state. Preliminary results are promising, but the context in which they have been obtained is limited.

There are undesirable consequences of these special program coordination and integration efforts which may penalize the intended beneficiaries of the program---students with special educational needs. Many of these consequences are rooted in the policies and regulations of the individual programs. An

eventual decline in funding often accompanies local efforts which have been successful in preventing serious learning problems from developing in some of their special needs children. Similarly, movement away from pull-out programs, which more visibly involve additional resources (reading labs, special equipment, etc.), and toward in-class provision of services often results in the gradual erosion of those resources for use with special needs students. While early intervention and assistance in the "least restrictive environment" (i.e., the classroom) are currently felt to be most beneficial for students with special needs, the effects of these coordination efforts on other students and teachers must be carefully studied.

Considering these findings and the existing matrix of special programs related to a diverse population of students with special needs in Washington's public schools, issues related to providing special program services must be examined at several different levels. These levels include the state legislature, the state office of public instruction, school districts and ESD's, schools, classrooms, and individual students. No one would argue that the most important of these are the students throughout Washington's schools. Regulations and administrative policies under state control can be reviewed toward the most equitable and efficient provision of these services statewide. Delivery systems which make the best use of local resources and expertise to serve their particular group of special needs students can be implemented in each school and district. In trying to meet these goals across the state, the studies synthesized here provide some guidance which take the form of implications and recommendations for best providing an education for the special needs students in Washington.

Recommendation 1. Innovative methods of providing special program services at the local level need time and support to develop into improved practices in the education of special needs students. Design, implementation and evaluation of these efforts must accumulate over time to meet local needs and ensure their effectiveness. Statewide dissemination efforts must continue to follow the identification of effective practices.

Recommendation 2. Districts are not all alike throughout the state. Many have only two or three of the five special programs studied in this report, and their student populations differ a great deal. A Chapter 1 student may move from one district to another and no longer qualify for the same assistance. The relatively few districts with large migrant student populations face very different challenges than those whose students with special needs are largely served in Chapter 1 and Special Education. While general statewide policies for special programs are needed, statewide efforts at improving services for special needs students must not be confined to a review and revision of legislation and regulations. Plans for improvement at the local level can be designed which better match the student needs and available resources in those local contexts.

Recommendation 3. Existing state initiatives and support for school improvement efforts can be utilized to include studies of special programs in schools and districts throughout the state. School management plans and self studies of school improvement can include informative descriptions of their special needs population, services provided, and evaluations of their effectiveness. These efforts must continue at the local level. Just as the coordination of special programs is seeking to integrate instructional services in the regular classroom, so must local plans for school and districtwide improvement include their education of students with special needs.